



ELOISE BUTLER WILDFLOWER GARDEN AND BIRD SANCTUARY WEEKLY GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

Phenology* notes for the week of May 27 to June 4, 2018

After temperatures climbed to 100 for a hot and muggy beginning of the week, the heat broke with a string of rainy days and has remained cooler and breezy.

With much needed water, the woodland is lush and green, and most plants have moved into their season of seed production. Look for seeds of all shapes: sticky burrs of buttercups and cleavers, lanterns hanging from the bladdernut tree, still-green berries on dogwoods and gooseberry bushes, and the pointy beaks that earned wild geranium the nickname “cranesbill.” Arrowwood viburnum and Philadelphia fleabane bloomed in the woodland this week. In the wetland, the long-awaited showy lady slipper revealed its first bloom on June 3rd, and many buds will continue to open over the next two weeks. Showy lady slippers are indigenous to the Garden site, and they would have been blooming over a hundred years ago alongside the blue flag iris and tufted loosestrife that opened this week. Others now blooming have been planted by Eloise and her successors: thimbleberry, a type of raspberry native to edges of the Great Lakes; the little blue forget-me-nots naturalized from Eurasia; and the yellow flag iris, another introduced Eurasian plant that can spread quite aggressively. Lengthening days will continue to launch a rainbow of sun-loving flowers into full show as we approach the summer solstice. New upland blooms in red and pink include heart-leaved four-o'clock, horse gentian, red clover and wild rose. Look for spiderworts in two hues of purple. Cinquefoil and tall buttercups splash yellow petals. In white, Canada anemone, rough bedstraw, and white false indigo bloomed.

It was a quiet week for birds as they hunkered down into nests and out of rain. Early in the week, Scarlet tanagers were seen and heard calling “chick-burr” in the woodland. The Saturday birding group noted the frequent songs of resident Baltimore orioles and red-eyed vireos. The vireo sounds similar to a robin but has a shorter song, calling, “Here I am! Where are you?” A green heron was seen standing in the ponds behind the Garden. Nearby, a catbird “meowed,” and birders watched a common yellowthroat flit back and forth in a tree. If you visit the upland, listen for the metallic song of the indigo bunting, and watch for ruby throated hummingbirds chasing mosquitoes.

The food chain is always in action here in the Garden. This week, tiny ants attempted to carry off the shiny, armored carcass of a stag beetle. Bumble bees feasted on wild blue indigo nectar, creating a meadow-wide buzz. Although mosquitoes chased humans by day, the little brown bat emerged to turn the tables at night. Preschoolers watched a garter snake swallow a toad. Garters eat any meat they can overpower, including the wetland’s resident earthworms and leeches. But the snapping turtle seen crossing the parking lot this week is known to eat garter snakes for breakfast. Perhaps the phantom crane fly, catching the breeze with a balloon of delicate legs, is the only one who avoids the food chain altogether. Flickering just out of sight of predators and eating nothing, it survives just long enough to send another generation into the world.

For more information about the past week’s events, tour information, or answers to questions about the Garden ask the volunteers and naturalists on duty.

**Phenology: The study of periodic biological phenomena such as flowering, breeding and migration especially as related to climate.*